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ABSTRACT

Research does not support the contention that underrepresentation of women and minorities in the educational administration hierarchy is a function of deficits in training, competence, experience, and number of qualified applicants. The purpose of this study was to examine factors affecting the entrance of women and minorities into this hierarchy. Investigation focuses on intrinsic factors existing as barriers to equal access for women and minorities and the effect of such demographic factors as race and age on perceptions of equal access. A 56-item questionnaire was distributed to graduate students in administration at a large southern university. Respondents included 63 women and 19 men, of whom 22 were black and 60 white. The questionnaire measured six key elements of intrinsic factors relating to equal access: (1) level of aspiration, (2) perceptions of probability of goal attainment, (3) self-perception, (4) motivational factors, (5) level of determination, and (6) factors significant to goal attainment. Statistical analysis of findings indicate that no significant differences exist between women and men or between blacks and whites on the variables. Additional research is suggested. Eleven references are included. (WTH)

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Factors and Perceptions of Equal Access for Women and Minorities in Educational Administration

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Objectives

The purpose of this study was to examine factors affecting the entrance of women and minorities into the educational administration hierarchy. Specifically, the following research questions were investigated: (a) To what extent do intrinsic factors exist as barriers to equal access for women and minorities in administration? and (b) Do demographic factors such as race and age affect perceptions of equal access into administration?

Theoretical Framework

The present underrepresentation of women and minorities in the educational administration hierarchy has been documented by numerous regional and national studies (Bonuso & Shakeshaft, 1983; Jones & Montenegro, 1982; Metzger 1985; Valverde, 1980). Though some have suggested that the underpresentation is a function of deficits in training, competence, experience, and number of qualified applicants, available research does not support this contention. In fact, studies by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (1983), Frasher and Frasher (1979), Meskin (1974) and Gross and Trask (1976) do not affirm the decline in women and minority administrators to lack of training, experience, or competence.

The findings of studies investigating underrepresentation identify a variety of potentially relevant factors. Studies by Marshall (1984), Metzer (1985), and Valverde (1980) suggest sex-role stereotyping, sex and race discrimination, constraints imposed by self and family, low career aspirations, lack of confidence and initiative and, lack of sponsors, are attributed causes for low numbers of women and minorities in administration.

Studies of factors related to access patterns generally focus on respondents' perceptions of selected intrinsic and extrinsic variables and access differences on these variables by gender. Intrinsic factors are psychological in nature and are aspects of the personality, values, and attitudes of the individual (ie., aspiration level, sex-role stereotyping, lack of confidence and initiative, family or self imposed constraints, low self image, and negative perception of advancement opportunities). Extrinsic factors are those enviromental factors which may mediate entrance into the administrative hierarchy (ie., informal

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socialization and selection systems, sex-role stereotyping, sex/race/age discrimination, lack of role models/sponsors, lack of networks, lack of support for opposition to sex-equity policies, and lack of enforcement of Title IX mandates.)

This study utilizes intrinsic variables considered in several studies to determine whether aspirants to educational administration positions differ by gender, race, and age.

Method

Sample. The participants were graduate students in educational administration at a large, urban, state university in the South. Participants were surveyed on their responses and reactions to intrinsic factors that could affect their access into administration. A return rate of 74 percent (n=-82) was obtained such that 63 participants were women, 19 were men, 22 were black, 60 were white, 43 were young in age (20-35 years) and 39 were old in age (36-59 years).

Instrumentation and Procedures. The Professional Goal Questionnaire, a 56-item questionnaire, developed for this study was completed by participants. The scale is scored on a five-point Likert format measuring six key elements of intrinsic factors relating to equal access: level of aspiration, perceptions of probability of goal attainment, self-perception, motivational factors, level of determination, and factors significant to goal attainment. The alpha co-efficient reliabilities for the scales ranged from .40 to .96, with four of the six exceeding .70.

Results

Overall the results showed that there was an absence of significant differences between women and men and black and whites on the variables.

A MANOVA on the level of aspiration and age was significant (multivariate F $(3,72) = 3.22$, $p < .028$). Post hoc analyses indicated differences between younger and older aspirants such that respondents aged 20 to 35 were higher in their aspiration levels than respondents aged 36 to 59.

Race and age differences were present (multivariate F $(3,63) = 3.75$, $p < .015$) such that Blacks aged 36 to 59 and older Whites (aged 36 to 59) were higher than younger Whites (aged 20 to 35).

Lastly, younger subjects reported higher levels of determination to enter administration than older subjects (univariate F $(1,79) = 6.29$, p. <.014).

Discussion/Significance

This study contributes to the growing body of information which addresses the identification of factors mediating against the equitable inclusion of women and minorities in education administration. Incorporating variables considered in other studies of barriers to access, it suggests that there are no significant intrinsic differences between the sexes or between Blacks and Whites on personal variables that might be related to observed differential levels of entrance into the administrative hierarchy.

The lack of support for the existence of intrinsic barriers lends support to the hypothesis that extrinsic factor's play major roles in the observed patterns of differential access by race and sex (Bonuso & Shakeshaft, 1983; Jones & Montenegro, 1982; Stockard & Kempner, 1981; Valverde, 1980; and Zellman, 1976).

The study suggests the need for research which documents the role of extrinsic factors in limiting access. In addition, since some studies have found gender-based differences on intrinsic variables, (Marshall, 1984; Metzger, 1985; and Valverde, 1980) further analysis of regional or other population specific factors that could account for differential perceptions documented in the research should be conducted.

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